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## CURRENT OPINION

### **The Work of Editors in Babylonian Literature**

In the *Expository Times* for May, 1914, Dr. Langdon contributes an article on the "Methods of Theological Redactors in Babylonia." Assyriology lends the clearest support to the canons of criticism laid down by the critical school in the Old Testament. In many cases, we have the composition which the Babylonian liturgist composed and one or more copies of the compositions from which he borrowed. Dr. Langdon gives the translation of a Sumerian hymn to Enlil which was written *ca.* 2350 B.C. and has a distinct monotheistic tendency. This hymn was re-edited in 1900 B.C. and the redactor clearly asserted not only that Enlil was the only real ruler of the world but that other gods had no real existence. Other instances of redactorial additions have been found, and among the Assyrians, as among the Jews, late compilations largely replaced original compositions. This has a particular bearing upon the transmission of Wisdom literature but applies generally to the whole question of the composition of the Old Testament.

### **The Date of the Introduction of Incense into the Worship of Yahweh**

In the *Revue biblique* for April, 1914, M. Van Hoonacker writes on "La date de l'introduction de l'encens dans le culte de Yahve." He maintains that the altar of incense of the Priestly Code is not a post-exilic institution. The altar built by Solomon (I Kings 6:20, 22) would be an altar used for the offering of incense. Recent explorations have proved that incense was used in Canaanite and Hebrew worship before the Exile.

### **The Gospel of Paul**

In the *Revue d'histoire et de littérature religieuses* for March-April, 1914, Mr. A. Loisy writes on "L'Évangile de Paul." When Paul became a convert to Christianity he found it an active but small society or sect of Judaism; according to Mr. Loisy, the teaching of the spiritual leaders of the Christian society was entirely transformed by Paul: before his conversion he had known the teaching of the Christians; he had been convinced that it was contrary to the national faith of the Jews; he had persecuted the followers of Jesus. All at once he found himself a Christian: God had revealed to him the person of his Son and the meaning of the gospel. Paul had no need of other masters: he had been called by God himself; he had been predestinated to that knowledge and to that life. We can argue from this that Paul's conception of the kingdom of God was different from the traditional views among his fellow-countrymen. A Jew had no need to be personally predestinated to the kingdom of God: the whole nation was predestinated to it. If a special predestination was needed by Paul, was it not because his conception of soteriology was founded not upon the national hopes of Israel but upon the principle of election by grace and personal participation in it? As he thought of himself being called by God, so he thinks of other Christians who are also predestinated to life and who are called by God from every nation. As Paul has a clear conception of a universal religion he rejects as insufficient and out of date the whole Mosaic legislation. Unconsciously he has gone very far from Judaism, but his doctrine of justification seems at first sight to be largely Jewish. Salvation by faith is not for Paul merely the guaranty of immortality: in fact immortality is a reward due to the just; however,

faith only makes a man just before God, so that the believer is just in Christ and by him. So that even here, Paul does not reason on the lines of Jewish thought. He always comes back to the leading thought of his theology: faith in Christ saves the believer. The notion of a religion of mystery was as foreign to the preaching of the Christian society of the time, according to Mr. Loisy, as this principle of the soteriology of Paul. The preaching of John the Baptist and of Jesus, like the preaching of the prophets, was simple, but Paul, who looked upon his own conversion as a mystery, conceived Christianity as a religion of mystery where baptism is a rite of initiation, the Eucharist a rite for the initiated; by these rites the faithful are identified with the Spirit of the divine Redeemer, by them they have the certainty of immortality. The similarity with the heathen mysteries of the time is striking. The spirit of Christ dwells in the believer, so that he can understand spiritual things. The church is founded on the communion of the Spirit who works through the church. The church is the body of Christ because his spirit is in all the believers, appointing to every one his mission. Christ is, as it were, the new personality of each, so that the unity of the whole is realized in the higher personality of Christ. As the risen Christ has a spiritual body, he has also a social body, the church, and even a third body, the eucharistical body, which is somewhat identical with both of these. This notion of the mystery of the church is an essential part of the theology of Paul.

#### Who Is the "Ambrosiaster"?

Dr. Louter gives in the *Expositor* for March, 1914, an account of a new theory of Dom Marin on the identity of the "Ambrosiaster," published by this scholar in the *Revue Bénédictine* for January, 1914, in an article entitled, "Qui est l'Ambrosiaster? Solution nouvelle." The name "Ambrosi-

aster" was invented by Erasmus to indicate the unknown author of a Latin commentary on the thirteen epistles attributed to St. Paul, which has come down to us for the most part under the name of St. Ambrose. To the same author are now ascribed two other works, the *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti* handed down to us under the name of Augustine, and a fragment of a commentary on St. Matthew preserved in the same manuscript as contains the "Muratorian Canon." Dom Marin thinks that the author of these remarkable works is Evagrius, bishop of Antioch, who was a friend of Jerome and died in 392. He was a supporter of Damasus and upheld the Catholic faith against the Arians and he had a good command of Latin. Evagrius is known as the translator into Latin of Athanasius' *Life of St. Anthony*.

#### The Sources of Judges, Chap. 19

In the *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* for January, 1914, Professor J. A. Bewer, of Union Theological Seminary (New York), writes on "The Composition of Judges, Chap. 19." The latest critics, Budde, Moore, and Nowack, resorted to the theory of the combination of two sources. Professor Bewer shows that the present Hebrew text is corrupt and that when it has been reconstructed the narrative is so much a unit as not to compel the supposition of two documents.

#### Witchcraft in Old Testament Times

It becomes clearer that the popular religion of the Hebrews was very different from the teaching of the religious leaders of Israel. The religion of the people of Canaan before the Hebrew conquest was very similar to that of the corresponding class in Egypt. The common features of the religions are the worship of local gods, the belief in spirits, the use of magic. We

know that Canaanitish religious practices were adopted by the Israelites to a very great extent. We should expect, therefore, traces of magical practices in the Bible. In the *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* for January, 1914, Mr. W. Sherwood Fox studies "Old Testament Parallels to Tabellae Defixionum [Curse-Tablets]." Six curses are studied by Mr. Fox: the curse by the mother of Micah (Judg. 17:1-2) which was spoken, the curses by Jeremiah (Jer. 51:60-64) and by Zechariah (Zech. 5:2-4) which were written, the curse by Ezekiel (Ezek. 4:1-3) which was delineated (this amounts in magic to a written curse), the curse by Elisha (II Kings 13:17-19) which was accompanied by symbolic actions, and finally the curse by the author of Mal. 3:8-9. Some of these curses, but not all, were accompanied by symbolic actions, prepared and uttered in secret. Micah's prompt confession of his theft to his mother leads us to suspect that he felt himself under some compelling bond from which we may infer that his mother deliberately intended this to be the case. We apparently have therefore here a magic bond quite similar to that found in Greek and Latin curse-tablets. The symbolic rites accompanying the curses by Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Elisha subjected the victims concerned to the magic bond of an inexorable analogy. Such a conception of the effect of symbolic actions in magic has always been accepted by those who believed in magic arts. However strange this might appear to us, the prophets did not avoid the common view of their time touching these God-uttered curses. We may well conceive the rank and file in Israel as having viewed God as the Great Magician who on occasion casts an irrevocable bond upon himself. Probably Semitic practices shaped the conception of the working of curses among the Greeks. We know now that Semitic practices have very largely influenced the religious life of the latter.

#### The Date of Gen., Chap. 14

The story of the invasion of Western Asia by the king of Elam Kedor-Leomer and his vassal Amraphel, their conquest of Sodom and the other cities of the plain, the capture of Lot and his rescue by Abraham, do not belong to the cycle of traditions to which we owe the stories of the patriarchs. While these paint the patriarchs as shepherds, whose sons have to do menial service, even in the time of Joseph, the writer of Gen., chap. 14, speaks of Abraham as if he were a king, whose small army is well trained in war and who is equal to any of the petty kings of Canaan. In the *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* for January, 1914, H. Asmussen, writing on "Gen. 14, ein politisches Flugblatt," tries to determine the date when the story contained in this chapter came into existence. It is now generally accepted that Amraphel is the great Babylonian king Hammurapi. We may suppose that the story contained in Gen., chap. 14, was composed at a time when people spoke much of Hammurapi. We know that in the new Babylonian kingdom of Nabopolassar and of his son Nebukadnezzar the Babylonian rulers seem to have taken to task to exalt the memory of the days of Hammurapi. Nebukadnezzar likes to be called his successor. Nineveh had fallen, the Pharaoh Necho invaded Syria, reviving the claims of the Eighteenth Dynasty of Pharaohs over Western Asia. Necho was defeated at Carchemish by Nebukadnezzar, and his army driven back to Africa. It was sound diplomacy on the part of Nebukadnezzar to proclaim himself clearly the successor of Hammurapi: it gave him a legal right to his conquests, a better right than the Pharaoh's. The Jews of the captivity learned to know him in this character. The story of Gen., chap. 14, is the answer of the Jews: Truly they said, Hammurapi invaded our country but only as a vassal of the king of Elam—and Elam does not belong to the king of Babylon;

moreover, the invasion ended in the defeat of the invaders by Abraham who was really lord over Canaan. The claims of the descendants of Abraham ought to be better than the claims of the successor of Hammurapi. Abraham knew only one Lord, and this was the god of Salem, that is to say, of Jerusalem. For people living at the time of the Exile, the God of Jerusalem was Yahweh. We may also infer from the fact that Hammurapi is mentioned in our story as vassal of the king of Elam that Cyrus had already loomed in the political heaven of the Israelites: Cyrus was to a certain extent the successor of the kings of Elam who in olden times ruled over Babylon itself—but even the king of Elam, said the Jews with pride, was defeated by the glorious ancestor of the Hebrews. In conclusion, the story of Gen., chap. 14, was not written primarily as history for history's sake but is a kind of political pamphlet and can be best understood as a product of the latter part of the Exile.

### Is Buddhism Original?

Dr. W. T. Whitley, writing in the *Review and Expositor* for April, 1914, on the subject, "Is Higher Buddhism Christian?" criticizes a theory held by Dr. Timothy Richard, a Missionary to China. Gotama, the Buddha of enlightened man, lived at the time covered by the Book of Ezra. Later the Buddhist teaching which had been memorized and spread abroad was committed to writing in the Pali language. Buddhism was then an attempt at salvation of self; its doctrine of God was agnostic; asceticism was practiced. In the first century A.D. the king of Kashmir adopted Buddhism but many notions foreign to it were added to it. Gotama was deified; images and ritualistic worship were met with; an elaborate theology was created; the Pali sacred books were rendered into Sanskrit and many new ones were composed in that tongue. Now in the year 65 A.D. a

commission of inquiry was dispatched from China to India to inquire into Buddhism and returned two years later to China with many books. A stream of missionaries followed from India to China, and Buddhism became far more important there than in India, so that in 520 the chief Buddhist dignitary transferred his headquarters to China. Chinese Buddhism differs very much from the original teaching of Buddha. It is altruistic and its highly elaborate worship is based on the belief in saints and angels. As for Christianity, it was probably carried to China in the fifth century and for several centuries Nestorian churches existed in that country. A man of Chentung, China, named Chiu Chang Chun, who died in 1288, wrote a book called *A Journey to Heaven*, a translation of which has been published by Dr. Richard. The book can be compared to the Egyptian cycle of stories in the *Arabian Nights* and to Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Dr. Richard claims that its main purpose is to magnify Higher Buddhism, although it embodies the main teaching of Confucianism and Taoism and even of Nestorianism. This Higher Buddhism, in spite of its Buddhist nomenclature, declares itself the Mahayana or the Great Other religion, higher than all others; according to Dr. Richard this Higher Buddhism, which does not believe in the Nirvana or practical annihilation, which regards Gotama as God's Incarnate One and believes in the value of prayer, is Christianity, "Mahayana Christianity" as he calls it, which existed in China before Nestorianism and persisted after it. Dr. Whitley thinks that Dr. Richard has not proved his point but that the *Journey to Heaven* shows that possibly in the thirteenth century there was a movement to blend Christianity and Buddhism. Whatever Christian truth has been adopted by Higher Buddhism has been so overlaid, amalgamated, and distorted that it is hardly to be recognized. The errors of the Roman

church and of extreme Christian sects are trifling compared to the fatal blunders of the ancient Chinese church if it has really compromised with Higher Buddhism.

### **The Old Testament Idea of Atonement in the New Testament**

In the October number of the *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*, Wilhelm Böttcher writes on "Der alttestamentliche Sühnopfer-Gedanke in Neuen Testament." The primitive idea of sacrifice was that the victim or offering was food for the god. Later came the notion that God rules over the whole world and that man, weak and sinful, is impure in the eyes of the Lord. God, however, takes away the iniquity of the man who acknowledges his guilt and unworthiness (Isa. 6:5). With this notion grows the practice of offering sacrifices, especially of animals. In the poems of the Servant of Yahweh (Isa. 42:19 ff.) we meet the notion of man atoning for other men, to which may be compared a tradition concerning Moses (Exod., chap. 32). The servant of the Lord expiates the sin of his people: he glorifies God even in his death so that God becomes again favorable to Israel. This conception of God's displeasure is very clear in the theology of Paul. According to him God's wrath is caused by the impurity of the heart of man (Rom. 1:24). Deliverance from the wrath of God will be deliverance from the dominion of sin and this deliverance can only be through a means by which the heart of man returns to God. Christ's sacrifice made it possible for God to be not merely a judge but a deliverer. The influence of the doctrine underlying Old Testament sacrifices is clearly seen in Eph. 5:2. where Paul says that "Christ gave himself as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor." Paul developed the ethical side of the Old Testament conception of sacrifice for sin and spiritualized the artificial

idea of connection between the victim and the sinner who offers it as a sacrifice of expiation into the higher essential solidarity of Christ and the believers, the oneness of Christ with the church.

### **The Psychology of the Prophets**

In the *American Journal of Theology* for April, 1914, Professor D. E. Thomas writes on "The Psychological Approach to Prophecy." In the psychological experience of the prophets, we can distinguish four elements: (1) the influence of his antecedents and inheritances including the form of earlier prophecy; this latter point is important: trance and ecstasy were the conventional forms of inspiration and the prophets had, in the nature of the case, to look upon them as a necessary and integral part of the message; in the period of the greater prophets, however, this ecstatic possession, as a state, was at the minimum, and a conscious intuition of truth, with little or no excessive excitation, took its place; (2) the prophet's environment, the sufferings, the joys, the hopes of his people; (3) the prophet's temperament; (4) the prophet's experience. The prophet is to a great extent a child of his times but his mental life is more intense than the mental life of his fellow-countrymen so far as religious questions are concerned. The Hebrew prophet was probably not an educated man in our sense of the term, but he was awake and new truth was constantly coming to him. On the one hand, he identified himself with his people and this explains why he was so zealous in matters of politics and government; on the other hand, he felt that he was closely connected with God and aware of his purpose, hence his own consciousness was both a social- and a God-consciousness. The theory of Dr. Kaplan that the original element of prophetic experience is a "premonition" is unscientific.